The COMPLETE GUIDE *to* INDOOR GARDENING

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Introduction

Variegated ivy (Hedera *'Mona Lisa'*)

Maidenhair fern (Adiantum pedatum)

Flaming sword (*Vriesea splendens*)

Scutellaria costaricana

MOST OF THE plants we grow indoors are simply outdoor plants from warmer countries. They have their origins in rain forests and deserts, mountainous regions, and wide, open plains. They have the same likes and dislikes in terms of light and water as the plants we have in our own gardens, the main difference is that they usually have a higher requirement for warmth and humidity.

The effect of trying to grow a plant in unsuitable conditions is the same indoors as out – it will become stressed as it tries to cope, vulnerable to attack by pests and diseases, and will ultimately give up the struggle and die. Unfortunately, as far as indoor plants are concerned, this happens so often that they have come to be regarded as short-term and expendable.

Indoor plantings tend to develop on a much more casual basis than outdoor ones, with most plants being bought because they catch the attention. We have all succumbed to the "impulse buy" at the garden center or nursery,

Arrowhead plant (Syngonium podophyllum)

when a glorious display can tempt the most resolute, especially at those special times of year, such as Christmas or Mother's Day. For a few weeks, the plant looks lovely, then it fades and is thrown away – but is this really all there is to it? How much longer would the plant flower if its growing needs were really attended to? Could it survive to flower again next year? Could that one plant produce others to fill out the display or to share with friends?

All the tender, loving care in the world will not help a plant which has been poorly treated before you buy it. It is much better to buy from a nursery or garden center where attention has been given to the plants' well-being. Some centers grow their own plants, so there is no stress from transportation, drying out in a storage area, or sudden changes in temperature. Even centers without growing facilities can generally be relied upon to keep the conditions as good as possible until the plants are sold.

At the opposite extreme, a plant sold from a garage driveway may have been subjected to cold wind and exhaust

Dieffenbachia *sp.*

Flaming katy
(Kalanchoe blossfeldiana)

Schefflera *sp.*

Cape primrose
(Streptocarpus *cvs*)

fumes, which will already have put the plant under stress from which it may never recover.

Take the time to find out where your plant prefers to live. Most houses have a variety of conditions available, from a warm, humid kitchen to a cool bedroom. Whether it is bright or dark, warm or cold, there is almost always a plant to fit the situation. The key is finding out which one. In this book , we have tackled each area in turn, giving a list of suggestions for plants in each case. Whether you want a lush foliage plant or a pretty flowering one, something to climb or something to trail gracefully from a hanging basket, there is a plant for all but the most inhospitable of situations.

Paper flower
(Bougainvillea glabra)

Having chosen your plant, the next step is to keep it alive and thriving, and the key to success is to take time to get to know the plants in your care. The Indoor Plant Directory is an alphabetical list of popular indoor plants, with family and well-known groups first, followed by an A-Z of plants in botanical Latin (genus or species) name order. Full cultivation information is given for

Cyclamen persicum

Callisia repens

each entry, including growing conditions and advice on propagation.

In the Care and Maintenance section of the book, the different aspects of the growing process are explained. There is no mystery to successful growing, it is a matter of patience and attentiveness to the plant's requirements. The need for light, water, and fertilizing are obvious, but what is humidity, and what is its relevance to the way a plant grows?

Finally, there is a section for that moment when you realize that, despite your best efforts, something has gone wrong. By using this section earlier, rather than later, a diagnosis should be possible which will make sure that the correct treatment can be followed, and the problem overcome. Most of the difficulties faced by plants are only fatal if they are allowed to develop.

The Complete Guide to Indoor Gardening aims to help the beginner start up and the more experienced to progress by offering inspiration and explanations. Understanding why something happens (or needs to happen) makes it easier to ensure that it *does* happen.

Rubber plant
(Ficus elastica)

Tradescantia
zebrina
'Quadricolor'

Peperomia

Polka dot plant
(Hypoestes phyllostachya)

Azaleas
(Rhodendron simsii)

Christmas cactus
(Schlumbergera)

Containers

MOST HOUSEPLANTS are grown at the nursery in plastic pots. While these are both practical and convenient for growing and watering, they do not look attractive in the home. Fortunately, there are a great many decorative flowerpots and containers available to disguise, or replace, your plastic pot.

Plastic pots have drainage holes in the bottom that allow excess water to drain away, and are therefore unsuitable for use indoors where water seeping from the pot can damage polished surfaces. The first consideration must be a saucer or drip tray under the pot to collect excess water. Remember that your plant must not be allowed to sit in a saucer of water because this is when waterlogging occurs, which can rot the roots and lead, eventually, to plant death. Although saucers are a practical method of collecting excess water, they are hardly decorative. Indeed, there is nothing worse than a sad-looking plant sitting on a

Wicker baskets

BELOW LEFT *The natural quality of wicker combines well with many houseplants. Baskets lined with plastic are widely available from garden centers and specialty stores, but if you have an old basket at home that you particularly like, it is easy to transform it into a suitable plant holder. Simply cut a piece of thick plastic from a garbage bag – black plastic is best because it does not show through the wicker – trim it to the correct size and put it inside the basket so that the plastic ends just below the rim. You can now either place the plastic plant pot inside the basket, or take the plants out of their pots and plant them directly in the basket, adding extra potting soil if necessary and finishing with a layer of fresh soil.*

Metal buckets, baskets, and bowls

BELOW RIGHT *Metal containers range from metal buckets, cast-iron cooking pots, baking pans, enamel pitchers, and wire baskets to the humble tin can that can be covered with moss or painted a suitable color. An old-fashioned metal washtub makes an ideal container because it has a flat bottom that can accommodate lots of plants side by side to create a magnificent grouped display (see page 63). A tall florists' bucket, on the other hand, is useful for displaying a single bushy or trailing plant, whose leaves can cascade over the sides. If you don't like the reflective quality of brand new tin, you could try painting it with turquoise acrylic paint to imitate the attractive patina of verdigris.*

windowsill with a chipped saucer underneath – this does not make the most attractive display.

One way to get around the pot and saucer problem is to place the plastic pot in a pot holder or cachepot. These come in all shapes and sizes and can be made of pottery, china, wicker, tin, or metal. Before you rush out and buy new containers, take a look around the home and see if there are any suitable receptacles that you could adapt for houseplants. Household items, such as enamel buckets, copper bowls, wastepaper cans, and log baskets, all make excellent and unusual containers, as do coffee mugs, casserole dishes, or a pretty vegetable dish that has lost its lid. A set of matching ceramic pitchers with necks wide enough to accommodate a plastic pot makes a great way to display similar plants (such as the primulas shown on page 43). The color of the container must complement the plants and not compete with them. A highly decorated pot in bright colors, for example, would completely overwhelm a delicate flowering plant. While a white container may seem like a safe option, this will contrast sharply with the foliage and draw attention away from the plant.

The container must be the right size for the plastic flowerpot, which should sit easily inside with the rim hidden. If the plastic surround is still visible, either repot your plant into a smaller container or cover the surface of the potting soil, including the rim of the container, with fresh moss, which will also conserve moisture and provide humidity for the plant.

It is possible to create a really stylish container by painting an old basket or aluminum container to match the flowering plant you have chosen. The easiest method to transform containers is to use spray paints, which come in just about any color of the rainbow. A good tip to remember when spraying anything is to put the object inside a large cardboard box to protect the surrounding area. Spray outdoors and wear a mask to protect your face and lungs. Try planting a group of grape hyacinths (*Muscari* sp.) in a blue-painted aluminum bucket, or arrange a row of dwarf daffodils (such as *Narcissus* 'Tête-à-tête') on a kitchen windowsill in individual clay pots that have been painted yellow. If you can't find a container that will accommodate your plastic flowerpot, you can always grow the

Miniature containers

TOP SHELF *Miniature plants that are popular in garden centers need attractive containers to set them off to their best advantage. Many household containers, such as china egg cups and small cups or mugs, make charming plant holders – especially if the decoration matches the color of the plant – but it is also possible to find more unusual containers at flea markets or secondhand stores.*

Glass vases and bottles

MIDDLE SHELF *Removing the plant from its plastic pot and planting it in a glass container is an unusual but very attractive way to display a plant. However, due to the transparent nature of most glass vases, it is important to disguise the root ball of the plant by lining the pot first with either fresh moss (see page 30), gravel (see page 31), or clear glass marbles sold especially for the purpose. If you are planting spring bulbs in this way, first remove as much soil as possible from around the root ball, then hold the bulb upright in the container while you add the moist gravel. The bulb will be hidden completely by the stones and the flowers will look as if they are growing directly out of the stones. An attractive method of displaying hyacinths is to place them in special glass pots filled with water. The neck of the pot supports the bulb and the roots draw up water from below (see page 51).*

Ceramic pots and dishes

BOTTOM SHELF *China and ceramic cachepots are the most popular type of container, and there is a vast selection on display at garden centers. Bear in mind that a highly decorated china container will overwhelm most pot plants, so it is best to go for neutral blues, creams, or greens that harmonize with the display rather than contrast with it too sharply. Bold stripes and colours may enhance the strong lines of an architectural plant, but they will certainly distract the attention from delicate leaves or flowers.*

plant directly in its decorative container. However, you must make sure that this container is completely waterproof – if it is cracked or porous, you will need to line it first with heavy duty plastic; a garbage bag is ideal. If there are no drainage holes in the base of the container, or if it is lined with plastic, make sure you don't overwater the plants because the soil mix will quickly become sodden and sour, causing the plant's roots to rot. To encourage drainage, cover the base of the pot with pieces of crockery shards (from a broken clay pot) before you add the potting soil.

Repotting your plant into a clay pot and then painting the pot a single color, or stenciling it to match your interior, makes an attractive way to display your houseplants. The Victorian-style, straight-sided clay pots, known as "long Toms," make charming and simple plant containers. If you don't like the bright reddish brown of new clay, you can age or distress it. To speed up the aging process, you can paint the outside with cultured yogurt and leave the pot outside in the garden for a couple of weeks. This technique will soon get rid of that newly bought look.

Clay pots

BELOW LEFT *Clay is a very sympathetic material for plant pots and there are many different sizes and styles – from straight sided pots known as "long Toms" to those with fluted edges or relief patterns. Basic clay pots are probably the cheapest kind of container you can buy to display your houseplants. However, most of them have drainage holes in the base, which means that you must place them on a saucer to collect excess water. In practical terms, plants displayed in clay pots will dry out rapidly, because moisture is lost through the sides of the container as well as through the soil mix. To cut down on moisture loss, soak new clay pots in water for at least an hour before use.*

Wooden tubs, trays, and window boxes

BELOW RIGHT *Wood is a versatile material that suits both modern and rustic settings. Containers range from large, ornate tubs that look attractive placed on either side of a doorway, to wooden garden baskets, window boxes, and even empty seed trays that can be filled with low-level plants for an informal display.*

The main drawback of wooden containers is that they are porous, which means you should either treat them with a horticulturally safe wood preservative before using them, or line them with a strong plastic liner to collect excess water. Alternatively, you can simply place the plastic plant pot inside the container and use a drip tray underneath.

PLANTS FOR THE PLACE

THE POSITIONING of indoor plants is critical to their survival, and this section of the book is devoted to choosing the right plant for the place, offering a situation-by-situation analysis of the home and listing the plants best suited to those positions.

From plants that will thrive on a sunny windowsill in direct sunlight, such as summer-flowering geraniums to those that prefer indirect sunlight, such as gerberas, and those that enjoy the cool light of an unheated spare bedroom or east- or north-facing kitchen, like azaleas, just about every plant and situation is covered. There is a special feature on plants for conservatories and sunrooms, plus advice on a wide range of topics, such as how color schemes and curtaining can affect a plant's health.

ABOVE *The delicate yellow heads of* Narcissus *'Tête-à-Tête' form an attractive display in a wrought iron basket*

LEFT *Spectacular golden trumpet* (Allamanda cathartica), *from South America, is best suited to a warm conservatory*

Positioning Plants

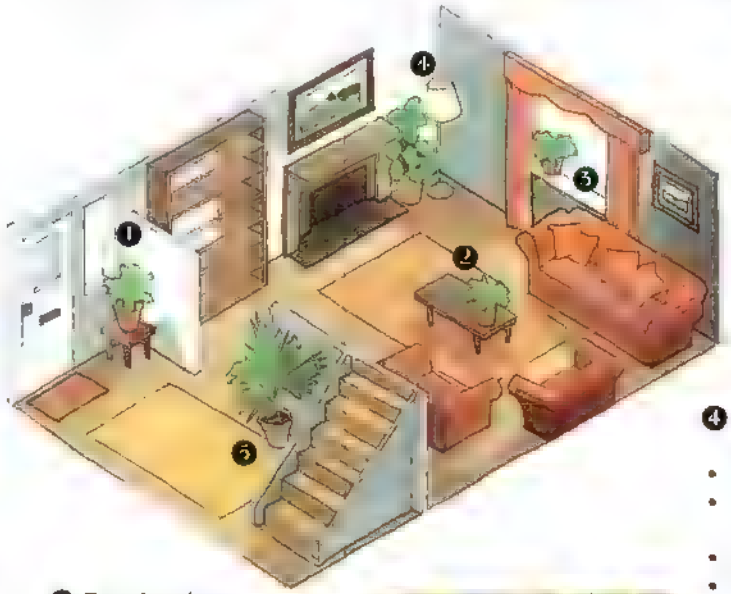
MOST OF US buy plants on impulse without really considering where we are going to put them. However, choosing the right plant for the right situation is a key element in successful indoor gardening.

In general, indoor plants are frequently positioned where they can be seen and admired by everyone, such as in the living room or hallway, but these areas do not necessarily provide the best growing conditions. The living room, for example, is usually the warmest, driest room in the house, and therefore not an ideal environment for many of the spring-flowering plants that require cool, humid, growing conditions. The kitchen windowsill, on the other hand, is often cooler and offers good humidity, making it a better place for cyclamen, azaleas, and primulas. In addition to the temperature of the room, you must consider how much light is available in the room.

Many people leave their plants in a permanent position all year round and wonder why they do not flourish. In general, flowering plants require more light than foliage plants, but remember that light intensity varies throughout the year. For example,

DOWNSTAIRS

When choosing a plant for a particular position in the home, make sure that it will receive adequate light, warmth, and humidity.



1 Cool, light hallway
- *Argyranthemum frutescens*
- *Campanula isophylla*
- *Cyclamen persicum*
- x *Fatshedera lizei*
- *Hedera helix*
- *Jasminum polyanthum*
- *Narcissus* cvs. (above)

2 Focal point: warm, bright light
- *Allamanda cathartica*
- *Brunfelsia pauciflora* 'Macrantha'
- x *Citrofortunella microcarpa*
- *Gerbera jamesonii* (below)

3 Sunny windowsill
- *Nerium oleander*
- *Pelargonium* cvs. (above)
- *Plumbago auriculata*
- Desert cacti

4 Floor display: warm, bright light
- *Cocos nucifera*
- *Howea forsteriana* (above)
- *Rhapis excelsa*
- *Schefflera elegantissima*

5 Focal point: poorly lit hallway
- x *Fatshedera lizei*
- *Maranta leuconeura*
- *Monstera deliciosa*
- *Senecio macroglossus*

a plant that thrives in the back of a north-facing room in summer, when the sun is strong and the days are long, may need to be placed much closer to the window in winter when the days are short.

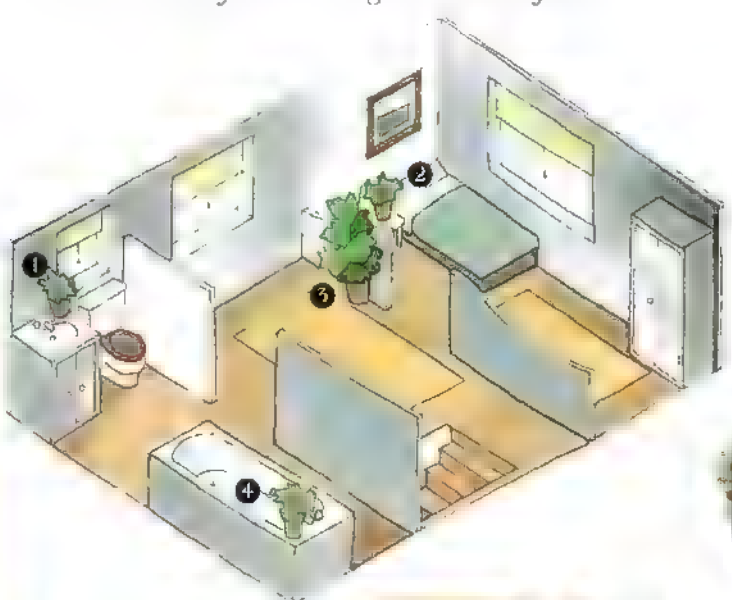
The color of the walls and the amount of curtaining provided can both affect the light intensity. Pale-colored walls reflect light, making a room appear much brighter, while dark walls absorb light. Some rooms may not receive any direct sunlight at all, but still have windows large enough to provide good natural light for growing certain houseplants

Indoor plants are grown in the nursery in a controlled environment and very few can tolerate sudden changes in temperature. A windowsill may offer the best light for your plants, but remember temperatures can drop to below freezing in many geographical regions at night, making it a hostile place for tender plants. Conversely, in summer you must take care that your plants aren't pressed up against the glass, which will scorch their leaves.

Most plants at the garden center are labeled with their ideal growing conditions, and there is a directory of plants at the back of this book with advice on temperature, light requirements, and maintenance. Before you make your selection, check that your home offers adequate growing conditions. Humidity, in particular, is crucial to many houseplants and there are several ways of increasing the humidity in your home (see page 77).

UPSTAIRS

It is sometimes easy to neglect plants upstairs. Always make sure that they have enough water and food.



1 Warm, bright bathroom
- *Caladium bicolor*
- *Cyperus papyrus*
- *Hoya lanceolata* subsp. *bella*
- *Rosa chinensis* (above)

2 Well-lit bedroom
- *Argyranthemum frutescens* (below)
- *Azalea*
- *Begonia* x *hiemalis*
- *Stephanotis floribunda*
- *Streptocarpus*

3 Floor display: landing
- x *Fatshedera lizei*
- *Ficus benjamina* (above)
- *Philodendron* spp
- *Polyscias guilfoylei*

4 Humid bathroom
- *Aeschynanthus speciosus*
- *Dracaena* cvs
- *Exacum affine*
- *Peperomia* spp.
- *Selaginella martensii* (above)
- Ferns (above)

Direct Sunlight

This is a really bright position that receives direct sunlight for most of the day – for example, a south-facing windowsill. Shading may be needed in summer months.

A SUNNY ROOM may seem an obvious place to display houseplants, but they have to be chosen carefully if they are going to thrive. A south-facing bay window can give a room the feeling of a desert on a hot summer's day and will be a very hostile place for all but a few sun-lovers, but this very same window could offer an ideal home for many of the winter-flowering houseplants during the dark winter months when light is at a premium.

Desert cacti are a good choice for somewhere that is likely to get hot, and they can provide a vast selection of shapes and textures with their different sculptural forms (see pages 54–5). Other, taller, foliage plants that are suitable for a sunny window in summer include phoenix palms and yuccas, both with tough leathery leaves, but even these need constant turning and attention to keep them happy and growing well

The summer-flowering geraniums will tolerate a lot of bright sun in the middle of summer and are especially suited to a sunny windowsill. Scented-leaved geraniums, in particular, are a real boon in a sunny situation where the warmth of the sun releases their aromatic scent. Good varieties include *Pelargonium crispum* 'Variegatum' (lemon-scented), *P. tomentosum* (mint scented), and *P. odoratissimum* (apple scented)

In winter, jasmines and bougainvilleas are an excellent choice for a sunny windowsill. However, these wonderful plants really don't like dry air and must have humidity to be successful. A moist, but never waterlogged, soil is necessary, and they should be watered with warm, soft water

Windowsill of geraniums
RIGHT *These scented-leaved geraniums thrive on a sunny windowsill, where the warm sun releases their aromatic perfume.*

TRUE SUN-LOVING PLANTS

Only a few plants like to bask in the sun in the hottest months of summer, and even these must be watched carefully or their leaves will soon become scorched and dry. Many of the bromeliads thrive in hot, sunny conditions.

PLANTS THAT TOLERATE FULL SUN

The following plants will tolerate a hot, south facing position in summer:

Bromeliads
Flaming sword *(Vriesea splendens)*
Pineapple plant *(Ananas bracteatus)*
Rainbow star plant *(Cryptanthus fosterianus)*
Urn plant *(Aechmea fasciata)*

Flowering Plants
Geranium *(Pelargonium cvs.)*
Golden trumpet *(Allamanda cathartica)*
Paper flower *(Bougainvillea glabra)*

Urn plant *(Aechmea fasciata)*
LEFT *This striking bromeliad, with its silver-banded, gray-green leaves, produces a long-lasting bright pink flower in the base of the rosette in summer. It is easy to grow, but remember to water into the flower rosette and not over the soil mix (see page 84)*

Pineapple plant *(Ananas bracteatus* var. *tricolor)*
RIGHT *This dramatic looking bromeliad has sharp, serrated leaves.*

HERBS

While herbs really prefer to grow outdoors in the garden, it is always useful to keep a selection handy in the kitchen as a short term planting. Either make a mixed display like this one, or group several plants of the same type together in one container to give a full planting.

Culinary mixed herbs

RIGHT *Your choice of culinary herbs will depend largely on the sort of food you prepare. This window box contains a mixture, but if you tend to use a lot of one particular type – for example, parsley – you may be better with a single planting. When the plants start to look leggy and thin, transfer them outdoors to the garden where they will soon rejuvenate.*

Indirect Sunlight

This is a warm position that receives little or no direct sunlight, although the overall level of brightness is still high.

MANY OF THE main living areas in our homes offer good natural light. Rooms situated on the east side of the house are often bathed in sunlight for a few hours in the morning, while those on the west receive soft light during the afternoon. These sorts of conditions are ideal for many houseplants, since very few enjoy basking in hot summer sun all day long. If your home offers good natural light, you have many choices available to you from nurseries, with flowering and foliage plants to choose from throughout the year – from gerberas, busy lizzies, and Cape primroses in summer to chrysanthemums, kalanchoes, begonias, and poinsettias in winter.

One of the most popular rooms in which to display houseplants is the living room, as this is where we spend much of our time. However, since this is probably one of the warmest rooms in the house, you must take precautions to prevent the atmosphere from becoming too dry. Many houseplants enjoy a warm position, but very few thrive in dry conditions and none like to be placed near a direct source of heat. If you have an open fire or central heating, you must find ways of providing humidity for your plants. Regular misting is beneficial to many plants, especially ferns, but it is not suitable for those with hairy leaves, such as African violets, because the water can get trapped in the hairs on the leaves and cause them to rot. A helpful tip is to place the pot on a saucer of moist pebbles, which provide humidity as the water evaporates off the stones and into the surrounding air. Make sure the plant isn't sitting in water, because this encourages bacteria which rot the roots. Another solution

Cheerful gerberas
LEFT *The striking, large, daisylike gerberas are perhaps more familiar as cut flowers from florists', but the flowering pot plant is now widely available in orange, yellow, red, pink, and white throughout the summer*

Centerpiece of peperomias
RIGHT *A selection of different types of peperomias arranged together in a basket makes a very good centerpiece for a dining-room table. This basket has been lined with plastic, a few pebbles have been added to the base for drainage, and the plants removed from their original pots. The surface of the soil has been covered with fresh moss to conserve moisture. Do not overwater these plants because they are likely to rot.*

is to place your flowerpot inside another larger container and surround the inner pot with damp moss. A useful tip is to place fresh moss over the surface of the potting soil, which not only preserves moisture and provides humidity, but also looks most attractive – especially if you replace the moss regularly with a fresh supply.

Telltale signs that your plant isn't receiving enough humidity are that the leaves begin to shrivel or show signs of scorching, or the buds or flowers fall off prematurely. If your plants have been displayed in a warm, dry atmosphere for several months at a time, they will often benefit from a short vacation in a slightly airier part of the house. Bedrooms and hallways that have good light, but are not as warm as the main living areas of the house, are good places to move your plants to for short periods of time when they are starting to show signs of poor humidity.

One of the advantages of growing houseplants in containers is that they are portable, which means you can move them around according to the season. Different rooms offer different levels of light throughout the year, so if your indoor plants are not receiving enough light in one area of the room, you can move them to a brighter position with little effort. A begonia or African violet, for example, that thrives in the center of the living room in summer when light levels are high, may need to be placed closer to the windowsill in winter, when the sun is weak and the days are short – especially in northern latitudes. Temperatures, too,

WINTER PLANTINGS

There is a wide selection of flowering plants available in winter – from the ever popular poinsettias to more unusual specimens, such as the pentas shown below. A fair amount of winter sunshine will not harm many flowering houseplants.

PLANTS FOR INDIRECT SUN

The following seasonal plants are all suitable for a warm position out of direct sunlight

Spring
Brazilian jasmine (*Mandevilla sanderi*)
Camellia japonica
Flamingo flower (*Anthurium scherzerianum*)

Summer
Begonia x hiemalis
Busy lizzy (*Impatiens* cvs.)
Cape primrose (*Streptocarpus* cvs.)
Gardenia augusta
Gerbera jamesonii
Hibiscus rosa-sinensis
Italian bellflower (*Campanula isophylla*)
Nut orchid (*Achimenes longiflora*)

Winter
Christmas cactus (*Schlumbergera x buckleyi*)
Jasmine (*Jasminum polyanthum*)
Ornamental pepper (*Capsicum annuum*)
Poinsettia (*Euphorbia pulcherrima*)

Red and white
LEFT *Flaming katy* (Kalanchoe blossfeldiana) *can be bought in flower at any time of the year and in a wide range of colors – including red, orange, and yellow. It has fleshy, succulent leaves and a long flowering season*
BELOW *A new plant to look out for and one that flowers during the winter months, pentas requires a warm bright position. To maintain a compact shape, pinch out the stem tips*

can fluctuate – especially at night. So if you move a plant onto a sunny windowsill in winter, remember to bring it back into the middle of the room at night when temperatures plummet. The same applies in summer when you must take care that your plants aren't pressed up against the glass, which will scorch their leaves and cause them to turn brown around the edges

Dramatic, single color displays

RIGHT *The poinsettia* (Euphorbia pulcherrima) *is one plant that everyone associates with Christmas, with its large colored flower heads in brilliant red, pale pink, or butter-cream. The flowers are not really flowers, but are colored leaf bracts with the tiny real flowers at the top of the bracts*

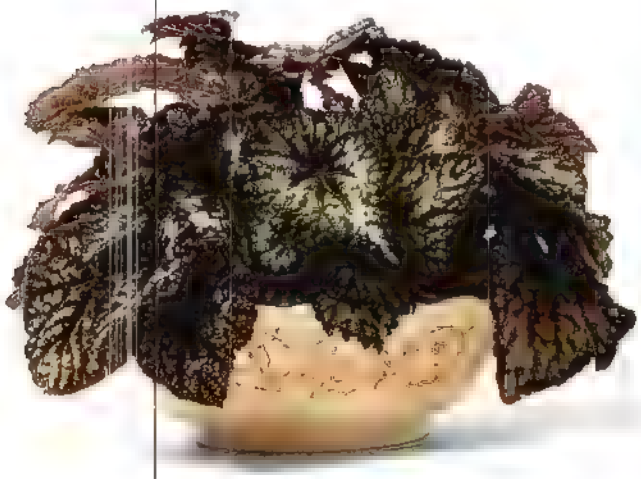
BELOW *This attractive plant, known as the lipstick vine* (Aeschynanthus pulcher), *produces a mass of bright red lipstick-shaped flowers on long stems with pointed leaves edged in purple. Place it in a bright position with average warmth, and water with tepid water. Provide some humidity by misting the leaves*

Rotating your plants is an important part of caring for them, because if you leave a plant in a permanent position all year round it will eventually grow towards the main light source and lose its shape. If your plants are grouped in the middle of, perhaps, a dining room table, make sure you turn them each day so that all sides receive equal shares of light. This is especially important during the winter when light levels are low

If you like to display your plants together in a large container or cachepot, try to leave them in their own pots so that you can tend to them on an individual basis. Different plants require different levels of food and water, and if you keep them in separate pots you can remove them one at a time, check for dead or yellowing leaves or flowers, and water them individually, before returning them to the main container

Single planting

LEFT *This* Begonia rex, *with its large striking leaves, makes an attractive plant for a permanent display. Water well, but allow the top half of the soil to dry out between watering. Mist the leaves frequently and surround the inner container with damp moss to maintain humidity levels*



Grouped display

BELOW *The Rex begonias, with their attractive and varied foliage, do really well in a warm bright spot away from direct sunlight, which can scorch the leaves and make them turn brown. Several different varieties planted together in a bowl, as here, make a long lasting, colorful centerpiece. Try to leave the individual plants in their plastic pots, rather than planting them together, so that you can tend them on a personal basis*

BEGONIA LEAVES

With their magnificent leaves, which have markings in shades of purple, red, pink, and silver, begonias provide as much color as any flowering plant.

Single foliage display
ABOVE RIGHT *The fresh, grassy stems of these house bamboos* (Fargesia nitida) *are set off by their straight-sided, aluminum containers. A group of two or more plants is particularly eye catching and works well in a modern room setting*

Harmonizing colors
RIGHT *A popular flowering plant, which is available from garden centers and nurseries, the Hiemalis begonia comes in a wide range of colors with single or double flowers. For maximum impact, group several plants together in a large container. This basket contains red and pink flowers*

Cool Light

This is a cool position that receives little or no direct sunlight; for example, a bright window in a north- or east-facing kitchen, hallway, or unheated spare bedroom

THE POPULAR winter- and spring flowering azaleas, cyclamen, and hydrangeas that are so often given as presents will quickly drop their flowers and die in the dry air of a warm, centrally heated living room. These plants prefer a cool position with good light and some humidity.

These conditions can be found in rooms that receive sunlight for only part of the day, either an east facing window that receives cool morning sun or a really light, large, north-facing window. The color of the walls in a room and the amount of curtaining over a window can both affect the light intensity. Pale colored walls reflect light, making a north facing room appear much brighter, while dark, somber walls absorb light. Some rooms may not receive any direct sunlight at all, but still have windows large enough to provide good bright light for growing plants. A windowsill probably receives the most light, but remember that temperatures can drop to below freezing here at night – especially if plants are left behind drawn curtains.

As well as considering the correct light source for your plant, think about the temperature in the

Mini pots
RIGHT *These dainty azaleas would look charming placed on bedside tables*

Creating impact
BELOW *Grouping several delicate plants together increases their impact because it concentrates their colors at one level*

room. Temperatures of around 60–65°F (16–18°C) are ideal for most bulbs, azaleas, and cyclamen, but these can be difficult to achieve in most houses. Azaleas really dislike warm conditions and must be kept permanently moist, without being water logged, if they are to thrive indoors. They also need good humidity, so the secret is to mist your plants daily or place them on a bed of wet gravel. When the flowers have finished, move the plant to a frost free position – somewhere like a cool conservatory or porch – and when the danger of frost has passed, plant it outdoors in the garden. Plunge the pot into the soil in a shady corner and make sure it doesn't dry out during the summer. You can then lift the pot again in fall, ready to make a lovely display in time for Christmas

Cyclamen are one of the many flowering houseplants available around Christmas time and popular as gifts. However, these beautiful plants are often short-lived due to a lack of understanding their needs. This is as shame, because well grown

Basket of azaleas
ABOVE *A basket of azaleas* (Rhododendron simsii) *is a good choice for this cool, east-facing bedroom. When displaying plants in a basket, always line it first with plastic to ensure it is waterproof. If possible, leave the plants in their plastic pots so that you can water and tend them on an individual basis.*

PLANTS FOR COOL LIGHT

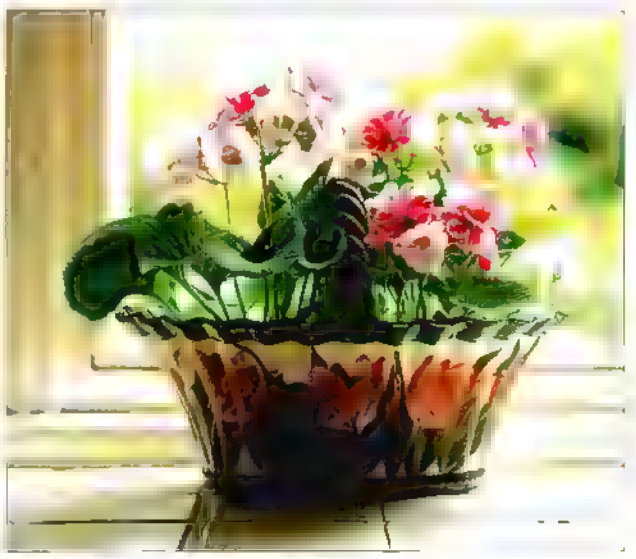
The following plants are all suitable for a cool bright position

Pink and red
Azalea *(Rhododendron simsii)*
Cyclamen persicum
Manuka tree *(Leptospermum scoparium)*
Tulips (e.g. *Tulipa* 'Red Riding Hood')

Yellow and orange
Black-eyed susan *(Thunbergia alata)*
Narcissus cvs (e.g. *N.* 'Tête-à-tête')
Primula obconica

White
African hemp *(Sparrmannia africana)*
Florist's cineraria *(Pericallis x hybrida)*
Italian bellflower *(Campanula isophylla* 'Alba')
Jasmine *(Jasminum polyanthum)*
Lilies (e.g. *Lilium regale)*
Pick-a-back plant *(Tolmiea menziesii)*

Blue and mauve
Crocus cvs
Florist's cineraria *(Pericallis x hybrida)*
Hydrangea macrophylla
Primula obconica



Fluted flowers
RIGHT *The delicate flowers of this* Primula obconica *are set off by a pretty china basket, with its fluted rim and painted flowers around the outside. Although these plants are usually treated as annuals and discarded after flowering, they will flower again if they are kept cool during the summer months*

cyclamen can last for many weeks and be kept from season to season, getting bigger and bigger each year with a large head of flowers. Cool conditions, a bright room, and careful watering – never directly onto the tuber – are all these plants need if they are going to thrive.

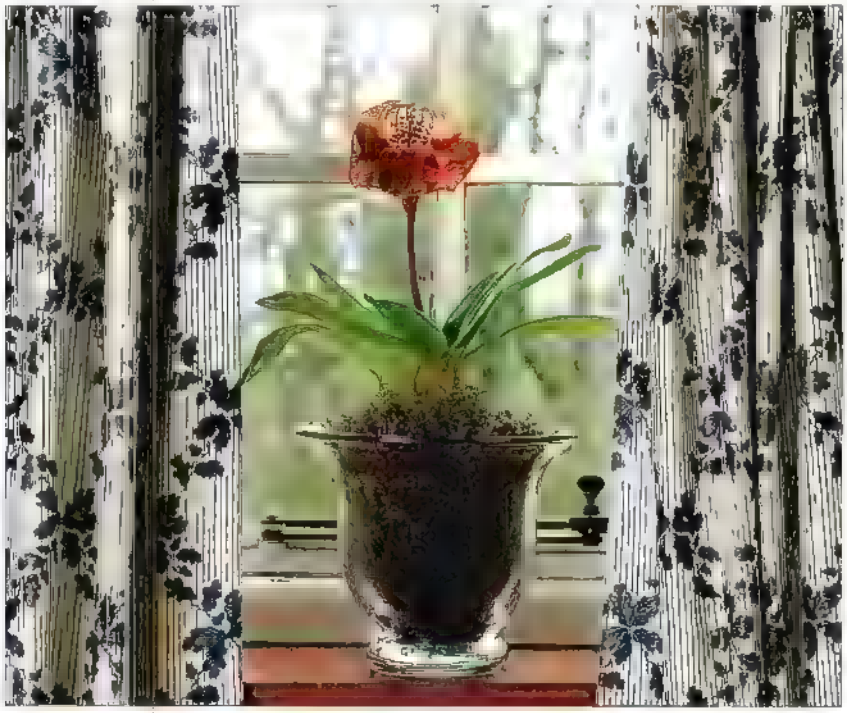
Indoor bulbs need similar conditions and, although their flowers do not last for long inside the house, they are a welcome sight in spring, bringing enormous pleasure. Bulbs like hyacinths, muscari, and daffodils can all be planted outside in the garden when they have finished flowering.

The cymbidium orchids are an easy group of orchids to cultivate, and their exotic, waxy blooms suit many contemporary settings. The moth orchid *(Phalaenopsis)* is particularly striking, and while it may seem an expensive plant to buy, it can flower for several months if kept at an even temperature of around 60°F (16°C) and given good humidity, making it a worthwhile investment.

Handsome clivia
RIGHT *The* Clivia miniata *comes in orange, red, yellow, and cream with bell shaped flowers. Even when not in flower, the ribbonlike leaves make an attractive feature*

Orchid behind glass
BELOW *The slipper orchid* (Paphiopedilum *'Grozner Castle') enjoys good cool light on this east-facing windowsill. Always remove plants from the windowsill at night when temperatures drop.*

Modern display
RIGHT *The amaryllis* (Hippeastrum) *is a very popular indoor bulb, producing a magnificent display of glamorous flowers. It must be grown in a cool position and only brought into a warm room when it comes into flower.*



PLANTS WITH STRONG FLOWER IMPACT

The following plants all have large, striking flower heads.

Pink and red
Amaryllis *(Hippeastrum* cvs.)
Christmas cactus *(Schlumbergera* x *buckleyi)*
Cyclamen persicum
Oleander *(Nerium oleander)*

White
Gardenia *(Gardenia augusta)*
Gerbera jamesonii
Lilies (e.g. *Lilium* 'Casa Blanca')

Yellow and orange
Clivia miniata
Hibiscus rosa-sinensis
Shrubby verbena *(Lantana camara)*

Blue and mauve
Florist's cineraria *(Pericallis* x *hybrida)*
Hydrangea macrophylla
Passionflower *(Passiflora caerulea)*

Partial Shade

This is a position that receives no direct sunlight, although the overall light quality is not poor. Most plants featured in this chapter will thrive in the back of a room, away from a large window.

FLOWERING HOUSEPLANTS do not thrive in the more shady areas of the home, because they need maximum light to keep flowering and maturing. However, there are many beautiful foliage plants that will thrive permanently in a shady room and will cheer up the darkest corner.

A hallway or landing is often an area that is cool, since it is not heated to the same degree as the rest of the house. This can be a good area to grow leafy foliage plants, because they will not have to put up with the dry, arid atmosphere of the warmer living rooms. The Boston fern *(Nephrolepis exaltata)* is a good subject for a cool, shaded area – although it doesn't like deep shade – and looks very handsome displayed on a large pedestal with its bright green fronds cascading over the sides. If you need a taller plant, a fatshedera or

Architectural display
RIGHT *The fern* (Nephrolepis exaltata *'Bostoniensis') was favored by the Victorians for its beautiful bushy habit. This plant is not a deep shade lover, but would do well near an east-facing window.*

SPECIMEN PLANTS

These plants have eye catching foliage and a strong, architectural form, making them dramatic enough to display on their own in an attractive container.

Narrow leaf fig *(Ficus binnendijkii)*
BELOW *The* Ficus binnendijkii *(also known as* Ficus longifolia*) is usually grown as a tall, floor-standing specimen (see page 47), but here it has been grown into a short, compact shape. It is shade-tolerant and would do well standing on a table away from the window.*

Miniature tree fern *(Blechnum gibbum)*
ABOVE *This fern has a crown of stiff fronds and a small trunk that grows as the plant ages. Its arching shape is set off beautifully by the Victorian style vase.*

philodendron would make a good floor-standing specimen in a shady corner. For a table display, choose a grouped arrangement of leathery-leaved scindapsus and *Ficus pumila*, which will trail over the sides of the container. Another trailing plant, and one that is very easy to grow in partial shade, is the grape ivy *(Cissus rhombifolia)*. This has dark, glossy leaves that are often trained up a pole, although it can be grown as a trailing plant, making it ideal for a hanging basket. If the leaves turn brown at the tips, the air is too dry.

One of the advantages of growing plants in containers is that it gives you the flexibility to move them around. Beware of leaving your plant in a permanent position all year round. Even shade-loving plants enjoy a lighter position at some stage during their growing season to stimulate their growth and regenerate the plant. Rotating your shady plants from low light to stronger light is a good idea, providing it is done gradually and the plants are able to acclimatize slowly. Once the summer is in full swing, give your plants a break by plunging their pots into a shady corner of the garden where they will benefit from being out in the fresh air and an occasional shower of rain. Keep an eye on them as you would in the house to check for pests and diseases, and make sure you bring them back into the house before any signs of frost

Grouped display
ABOVE *A group of dieffenbachias makes a striking feature in a modern setting. Here, two varieties are grouped in clay pots with* Pellaea rotundifolia *arranged around the front. The variegation on the leaves means these dieffenbachias will not tolerate poor light.*

FERNS

Ferns thrive in the humid, shady areas of the home, such as a steamy kitchen or bathroom. The varieties shown below would all grow well in a terrarium or bottle garden

Hare's foot fern (Polypodium aureum)
Bird's nest fern (Asplenium nidus)
Cretan brake fern (Pteris cretica)
Polystichum tsussimense
Maidenhair fern (Adiantum raddianum)

Single planting
RIGHT *This handsome cristate table fern* (Pteris cretica *'Alexandrae'), with its long fronds and tipped leaflets, has reached full size, making it dramatic enough to display on its own. These plants prefer a warm environment with good humidity, like a bathroom.*

Conservatories

THE CONSERVATORY offers an opportunity to create an environment for both plants and people. Sunrooms and solariums also make perfect places for growing plants, and even screened in porches can suit many plants at various times of the year. There is so much more light in conservatories and sunrooms than the average room inside the home and, as long as the conservatory does not get too hot in summer, it will have good humidity and be the ideal place for many plants to thrive. Plants like plumbago, passion flower, jasmine, and abutilon will flourish in the cool and humid conditions of a correctly situated conservatory, and others, such as pot hydrangeas *(Hydrangea macrophylla)* or primulas *(Primula obconica)*, that last only a short time inside the house will thrive for many weeks. Conservatories offer the chance to create somewhere quite different from the house or garden for growing plants.

Tender rhododendron
ABOVE *A conservatory provides the ideal environment for tender plants that need to be brought inside to protect them from winter frosts. This tender* Rhododendron *'Lady Alice Fitzwilliam' overwinters in the conservatory and produces a fantastic show of heavily scented white flowers in early spring.*

Cascading basket of columnea
ABOVE *Hanging baskets are tremendously successful in a conservatory where they can reach huge sizes. This exotic looking* Columnea *'Stavanger,' with its red-lipped blooms, needs room for its trailing stems to hang freely.*

Border display
RIGHT *The bird's nest fern* (Asplenium nidus) *in this north facing conservatory has grown to full size with fronds of 4 ft. (1.2 m), giving architectural interest in both summer and winter. Variegated ivy provides good ground cover around the base and keeps the roots moist.*

The position of your conservatory is of the utmost importance if you want to fill it with lots of plants, as well as provide extra living space. A conservatory that is situated on a south-facing wall will become its own desert in summer and no plants will be happy there. A south-facing conservatory or sun room may be comfortable in winter when the sun is weak, but in summer temperatures can soar to 100°F (37°C), making it a hostile place for both people and plants.

Whatever aspect, ceiling ventilation is essential. Side ventilation cannot create the same buoyancy of atmosphere. You must also supply adequate shading with Venetian blinds or shades in summer.

If your conservatory has a solid wall, this is an ideal place to fix trellis or wires for climbing plants. Try and display your plants at different heights to give a natural growing environment – a tiered plant stand is ideal for this purpose, because it enables you to display several plants together. A shelf around the edge of the window makes a wonderful

Mass of Cape primroses
BELOW *The Cape primrose* (Streptocarpus) *is a native of South Africa that will flower over a long season Because these plants have delicate flower heads, they are best displayed in a group on a low table to increase their impact. Regular deadheading and fertilizing throughout the summer will encourage flowers.*

Basket of begonias
ABOVE *This* Begonia solananthera, *with its attractive waxy leaves on long trailing stems, will flower for many months, if it is kept in the right conditions. Choose a bright position out of direct sunlight and allow the soil to dry out between watering. The trailing stems snap easily, so be extra careful when watering. As begonias are prone to powdery mildew (see pages 116–7), always provide adequate ventilation*

home for tall or trailing plants, which can either be trained to grow up in front of the window or hang down below the windowsill

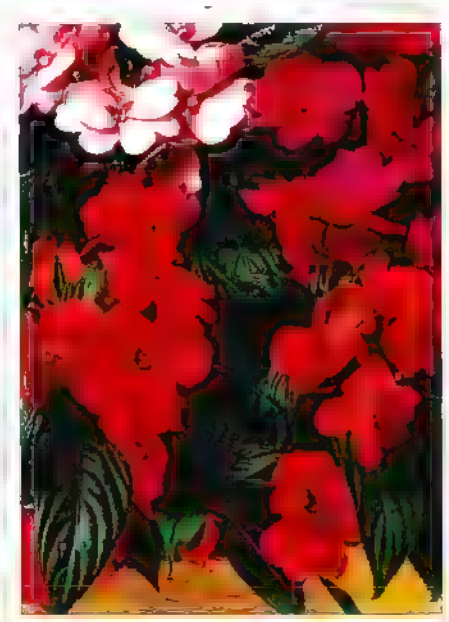
Most conservatories open directly onto the house and one of the joys of having such a room is the wonderful scent it provides when you open the doors in early summer. Scented plants, such as jasmine and trachelospermum, as well as those with aromatic foliage, like scented geraniums and the night-scented *Cestrum nocturnum*, are a valuable addition in this still and warm environment that concentrates their heady scent. Exotic-looking lilies, such as *Lilium regale* or *L.* 'Casa Blanca,' are a must in summer, but be careful not to brush against the pollen-laden stamens, which can stain clothes. Your conservatory can become a magical green cave in summer with pots of many different plants. You could try growing some of the exotic, old-fashioned conservatory plants so favored by the Victorians, such as the poor man's orchid *(Schizanthus)* or salpiglossis *(Salpiglossis sinuata)*.

In winter, seasonal flowering plants, such as azaleas, cyclamen, and primulas, will flourish in a cool conservatory. In fact, they are often happier here than inside the house where the dry central heating can scorch their leaves and stunt their growth. If a cyclamen or azalea begins to look unhappy indoors, it will often revive completely if given a short spell in a cool conservatory. The conservatory also provides sanctuary for some of the tender rhododendrons and camellias that like to spend the summer in a shady spot in the garden, but must be brought into a frost-free environment during the winter months.

It is important to grow a selection of green foliage plants in the conservatory, which will provide all year-round color and interest. Ivies and ferns are relatively trouble-free and can be planted in pots and moved around according to the season. Pots of leafy palms, both floor-standing specimens, such as the kentia or phoenix palm, and smaller varieties grouped on a table, add to the charm of many conservatories. And even "difficult" houseplants, like the maidenhair fern (*Adiantum raddianum*), will flourish in a conservatory where they have adequate humidity and light.

Wall of geraniums
LEFT *A solid wall is the perfect place to attach wires to train climbing plants. Here, variegated ivy* (Hedera cvs.) *provides all year-round interest, while ivy-leaved geraniums – including the mauve* P. *'La France' – give a splash of color in summer and early fall.*

PLANT DISPLAYS



IT HAS NEVER BEEN easier to create stunning plant displays in the home. Whether you are a keen indoor gardener or a complete novice, this section provides all the know-how and inspiration you will need to create arrangements for every situation, from a tiny nook or cranny to a spacious conservatory.

Learn how to group plants successfully, stake them decoratively, and make a focal point of a handsome architectural display. There are ideas for small flowering and foliage displays, succulents and cacti, and seasonal arrangements that will ensure a brilliant show of color all year round. Finally, there are tips on selecting containers, choosing plants to suit the decor of a room, combining colors, and making the most of foliage texture and shape

ABOVE *A group of busy lizzies* (Impatiens *'New Guinea' hybrids*) *in mixed colors*

LEFT *The singularly beautiful flowers of gloxinia* (Sinningia speciosa) *have speckled throats and large petals*

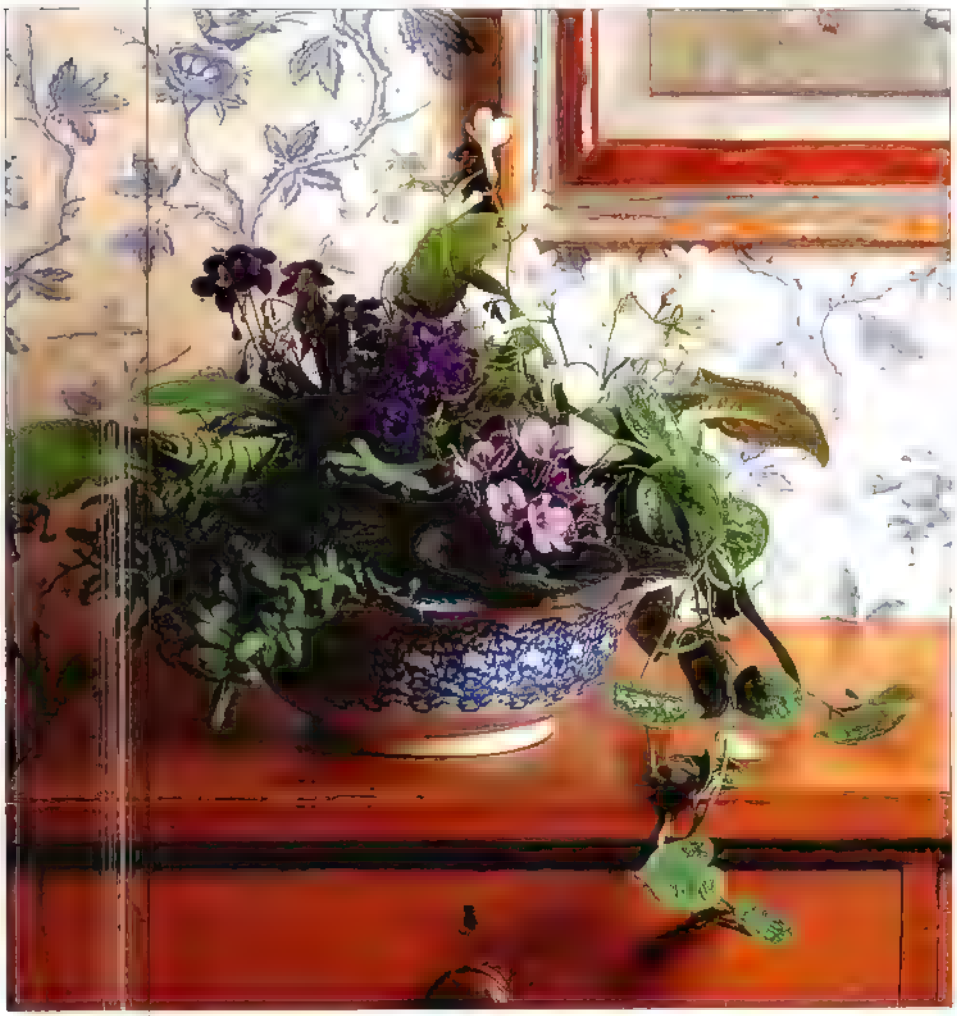
Grouping Plants

PLANTS LIKE TO BE grouped together because they give off water vapor, which makes the surrounding air humid and gives them a happy growing environment. From an aesthetic point of view too, a group of well-thought out plants will make a stronger statement in a room than several individual pots spaced around randomly.

The decor of your home plays an important role in your choice of houseplants, so make this your starting point. Consider the style of the room and your choice of wallpaper or paint. An ornate wallpaper, for example, would completely overwhelm a delicate flowering plant or feathery fern. A room decorated with large, vertical stripes needs a bushy plant that will contrast with the stripes and stand out against the walls. A fireplace is a popular place to display houseplants in summer, but consider how much light is available here before making your selection. A group of flowering plants may seem the ideal choice to brighten up a dark space, but they will not survive in shady conditions – whereas ferns will thrive in them (see page 32).

Once you have decided on the location for your plants, you are free to make your selection at the garden center. You might decide on contrasting colored flowers to suit a modern living room, or soothing mauves and whites for an airy bedroom. However, don't concentrate on color alone – consider the shape and form of the leaves too.

The next consideration is a container. You can either choose a large single container, such as a bowl or dish, which looks good as a centerpiece on a table, or a series of individual containers to suit a shelf or windowsill. If you choose the latter, pick ones that complement each other in color and shape, as this will help to unify the arrangement.



Creating a balanced display

LEFT *A ceramic sponge-painted bowl makes a perfect container for this bedroom arrangement in soothing shades of blue, silver, lilac, and white. Note how the trailing stems of the scindapsus complement the branches on the toile de Jouy wallpaper behind. When making a group of different plants, check that they all require the same growing conditions – these plants would all enjoy a warm situation, out of direct sunlight.*

Matching pair

RIGHT *Plants with delicate flower heads, such as these* Primula obconica, *look most dramatic when displayed together in a group. Here, they are placed on a kitchen shelf in matching ceramic pitchers for an informal feel. The plastic pots fit neatly inside the rims. Note how the plain green of the containers does not detract from the flowers.*

Decorative Staking

WHEN YOU GROW trailing or climbing plants indoors, it is important that you stake them successfully to create an attractive display. This can be done in several ways, using bamboo canes (see below), moss poles (see page 109), topiary frames (see opposite), or hoops made from garden wire (see page 108).

Tabletop topiary, which involves training plants around a wire support, is fun and easy to do, and you can create lots of interesting shapes. Start by selecting an evergreen plant with dense compact foliage and pliable stems. Ivy is ideal because it is fast growing and comes in many attractive forms with silver, white, and gold markings. It also grows easily from cuttings, making it an excellent choice for growing over topiary frames where several plants are needed. Simply snip off short lengths with some roots attached and plant them around the edge of a container. Another good foliage plant is the miniature creeping fig *(Ficus pumila)*, which can also be obtained in variegated forms.

Many flowering plants can be encouraged to grow around hoops and frames. The wax flower *(Stephanotis floribunda)* is easy to train around a hoop and carries the added bonus of beautiful scented white flowers. Another scented flowering plant that will quickly cover a trellis or pyramid is *Jasminum polyanthum*, with its pink tubular buds that become white as the flowers open.

Once you have selected your plants, decide what shape you want to train them. There are lots of commercial wire supports readily available from nurseries and garden centers. You can choose from spirals, hoops, columns, and wreaths. If you can't find one the correct size, try making your own from a wire coat hanger.

USING BAMBOO CANES

The most popular staking device is the bamboo cane, which can either be used with plastic ties to support individual stems (see left) or in a framework to prop several stems at once (see below).

'Casa Blanca' lilies
ABOVE *This large pot of lilies must be well-staked to support the large flowers. Place the bamboo canes in the pot as soon as the bulbs show through, because you may damage them by adding canes at a later stage*

'Jetfire' narcissus
RIGHT *Individual pots of narcissus are crammed together in this basket and bamboo canes are used to support the plants' stems*

USING A TOPIARY FRAME

Commercial topiary frames can be bought from garden centers, or you can make your own using coat hangers or garden wire. Don't forget to paint the wire first to prevent it rusting

Wire hoops
ABOVE *Madagascar jasmine* (Stephanotis) *and ivy are ideal for training around a wire hoop because their stems are pliable*

Ivy pyramid
ABOVE LEFT *Ivy is a fast-growing foliage plant that will grow over a wire frame like this one in about 18 months, depending on the cultivar.*

Ivy ball
LEFT *This topiary frame has been filled with sphagnum moss to form a firm support for the ivy tendrils to cling to. Keep the moss moist at all times and feed the plants regularly*

CLIMBING PLANTS

The following plants are all suitable for growing up a topiary frame

Flowering plants
Black-eyed susan *(Thunbergia alata)*
Hoya lanceolata
Jasmine *(Jasminum polyanthum)*
Mandevilla sanderi
Wax flower *(Stephanotis floribunda)*

Foliage plants
Cape ivy *(Senecio macroglossus)*
Creeping fig *(Ficus pumila)*
Ivy *(Hedera cvs.)*
Philodendron scandens
Pothos vine *(Scindapsus spp.)*
Rhoicissus spp.

Architectural Displays

A NUMBER OF INDOOR plants are dramatic enough to be given the spotlight and stand alone in a room, making a real focal point. This is particularly true of large plants, such as palms, which make handsome specimens and soon become part of the room's furniture, adding elegance and style and lifting the decor. But not all architectural plants need to be large. A pair of small dracaenas, with their striped leaves of red and yellow, make an eye-catching display placed at either end of a table in an entrance hall, and these plants are ideal if you don't have the space to accommodate a large floor standing specimen. In many situations, a large specimen plant can present fewer problems than a group of smaller plants. Although it might take up a great deal of space, there is only one plant to care for, while a group of small flowering plants will all need individual attention. One of the main problems with large indoor plants is that they can become dusty, just like the furniture, and need regular cleaning and sponging to keep the leaves dust-free (see page 118). Plants like the rubber plant *(Ficus elastica,*

Kitchen display
RIGHT *A tall* Ficus binnendijkii *stands in the corner of this north-facing kitchen. Its long spiky stems contrast beautifully with the variegated spider plant on the pine dresser.*

STANDARDS

Standard trees of all shapes and sizes make an eye catching feature. They are an expensive investment, but will last for many years if they are well cared-for.

Rainbow plant
(Dracaena marginata)
LEFT *This elegant plant has been carefully grown into a beautiful upright shape. Tall varieties look good placed on either side of a doorway, while small plants suit a table display.*

Weeping fig
(Ficus benjamina)
RIGHT *This popular, low maintenance plant is also available in a variegated form with cream-splashed leaves, making it a wonderful specimen plant for a modern interior. Here, the stems of several plants have been braided together to create an interesting twisted trunk.*

and the fiddle-leaf fig *(Ficus lyrata)* both have large leathery leaves that need regular care to keep them clean and healthy.

Finding an appropriate container to display a really large plant can often prove to be a problem, but it would spoil the elegance of a large plant by placing it in an unattractive plastic pot. Large clay containers, with a plastic dish placed in the base to collect excess water, are available in every size and shape from garden centers and garden architecture stores, or you could make your own container from a painted tin cannister or wastepaper basket.

Grouped foliage display
FAR RIGHT *This fresh looking grouping of bird's nest ferns and fig plants* (Asplenium nidus, Ficus benjamina, *and* F. pumila) *brightens up the corner of a north-facing hallway. A hall is an ideal place to display plants, since it is not usually heated to the same degree as the rest of the house, but make sure it is not drafty.*

Specimen plant
ABOVE *While most plants benefit from being displayed in a group with similar plants, some, like this polyscias, are dramatic enough to stand on their own.*

Kentia palm *(Howea fosteriana)*
RIGHT *The kentia palm is a graceful and elegant plant, which would look as good displayed with other plants as it would on its own.*

Canary date palm *(Phoenix canariensis)*
RIGHT *Palm trees were favored by the Victorians, who displayed huge examples in their houses and conservatories.*

Small Flowering Displays

THERE IS A SMALL flowering plant to choose from for every season of the year. Aim to grow a few different varieties that flower at different times so that you can keep the display going for as long as possible. Starting in the fall, there are the delightful *Cyclamen persicum* cultivars that come in a variety of soft colors. These small cyclamen are really much more charming than their larger cousins, and they often have attractive silver-green leaves. In spring, there are a large number of bulbs and primulas to choose from, followed by geraniums, miniature roses, and marguerites in summer.

Small flowering plants usually look best if they are displayed together, rather than randomly spacing them around the room. When growing several plants together in one pot, make sure you buy enough plants to fill it entirely – you may need three or four to create a really full display. A favorite place to show off houseplants is on the kitchen windowsill, where a row of three or four identical pots or ceramic pitchers can make a real feature filled with small flowering plants, such as cyclamen, in harmonizing colors.

Flowering plants make popular gifts and many will flower for long periods of time. Choose from African violets *(Saintpaulia)*, which are available all year round in many colors, and kalanchoes, with their abundant star like flowers that flower nonstop throughout the year. Cineraria *(Pericallis hybrida)* is a pretty plant to give as a gift, with its mass of daisylike flowers covering the bright green, heart-shaped leaves. However, these plants should carry a warning, as they won't survive in an overheated room and will also soon wilt and die if left on a hot windowsill.

Lisianthus *(Eustoma grandiflorum)*
RIGHT *Lisianthus are most often seen in florists' as cut flowers, but dwarf houseplants in blue, purple, and white are popular during the summer months. These plants are best treated as short-term investments and discarded after flowering has finished.*

Gloxinias *(Sinningia speciosa* hybrids)
LEFT *These exotic-looking plants are actually quite easy to look after. They come in a wide range of vibrant colors, their handsome flowers and leaves needing no additional adornment.*

BULBS

Bulbs are very easy to grow indoors and usually flower several weeks earlier than they would outside. Buy bulbs as soon as you see them at the garden center, when they are at their freshest, and plant them immediately.

Hyacinths
ABOVE *These hyacinths are grown in special hyacinth glasses without the need for soil. Simply place the bulb in the top of the glass and fill it with water until it just touches the base of the bulb. Put in a dark place and bring into the light when shoots appear. The bulb can be planted in the garden after flowering.*

Grape hyacinths *(Muscari azureum)*
ABOVE *Being small, grape hyacinths are best grouped together in a large container, as here, or planted as part of a bigger group of mixed bulbs. They have the same cultivation requirements as hyacinths, and can be planted in the garden when they have finished flowering.*

Tulips *(Tulipa* 'Red Riding Hood')
LEFT *This variety of tulips has been specially treated for indoor culture. Here, six individual pots have been grouped into a large metal filigree tray, lined first with plastic, then filled with moss. Do not overwater the bulbs, but keep the surrounding moss damp, which will provide welcome humidity.*

Small Foliage Displays

LEAVES, AS MUCH as flowers, contribute to the attractiveness of houseplants, and you can create some excellent displays using a selection of small leaved plants just as easily as the more dramatic, architectural leaved varieties (shown on pages 46–9).

When growing plants with small, fine leaves, you may have to group them together if the plants are naturally small, or still in their infancy, but once they reach full size, they look imposing in their own right. If you browse around garden centers, you will be surprised by how much color and variegation there is in any group of foliage plants that are grown for their leaves alone.

As well as plants with variegated foliage, such as the spider plant *(Chlorophytum comosum)* or the *Ficus pumila* 'Sonny' shown opposite, there are a wealth of plants with red, pink, brown, and purple leaf markings. An eye-catching foliage plant that would do well as a permanent planting is the *Begonia bowerae*, which has beautiful rust-colored leaves with green markings and a bushy habit. One of the most popular colorful foliage plants is the polka dot plant *(Hypoestes phyllostachya)*, with its brightly spotted leaves of pale pink. This is a plant that can grow quite big, but as it generally becomes straggly with age, it is best used as a young plant to add interest to a small foliage display. A good ground-cover plant for a bottle garden is club moss *(Selaginella martensii)*, with its fresh green, creeping stems that form a dense mat of foliage.

Another group of small foliage plants that need mentioning are the miniature ferns seen frequently in nurseries. These are baby versions of the bigger, full-grown plants, but when bought as small foliage plants they, too, can look attractive displayed in a group. The maidenhair fern *(Adiantum raddianum)* often shrivels and dies in an overheated home, and is especially suited to the warm humidity of a bottle garden.

CREATING HUMIDITY

Many small or miniature foliage plants – ferns and mosses in particular – require high levels of humidity to prevent their leaves from shriveling and going brown. Finding ways to create humidity is one of the secrets of success with your houseplants.

Glass garden
LEFT *Glass bottle gardens and terraria offer high levels of humidity and are ideal for growing many small ferns and "baby" plants. Under normal conditions, water vapor given off by plants evaporates in the air, but in a bottle garden it condenses on the sides of the container and trickles back into the soil. This bottle garden is created from an old fish tank, which has been filled with an assortment of miniature ferns and plants.*

Braided fig

LEFT *A Victorian-style "long Tom" container is perfect for this charming, dwarflike tree, with its head of delicate leaves. Creating topiaried shapes with houseplants is easy to do (see page 45). A pair of these trees placed on an occasional or dining table would make an attractive and long-lasting feature in the home.*

Trailing display

BELOW *The creeping fig* (Ficus pumila *'Sonny') is a versatile plant that looks as attractive grown up a pole as it does creeping along the surface of the soil. Here, it is displayed in a tall florists' bucket, which allows the foliage plenty of room to tumble over the sides. Small foliage plants such as this are often used as fillers in large arrangements, but when given their own space, they become star performers on their own.*

Single fern

LEFT *When a plant is really well grown, and has formed a good rounded habit, it can make a single architectural feature. This maidenhair fern* (Adiantum raddianum), *with its graceful bright green foliage, is a rather temperamental subject, but is happiest in a warm position with plenty of humidity. Keep the foliage well-misted and place in a bathroom or kitchen, where it will enjoy the humid atmosphere.*

Cacti and Succulents

CACTI AND SUCCULENTS are two fascinating groups of plants. The difference between the two is that cacti have modified side shoots, called areoles, carrying spines or hairs, while succulents have fleshy stems or leaves that store water. Some cacti are smooth and round, while others are knobbly, but they have all adapted themselves to give off as little water vapor as possible in their natural habitat. Most garden centers stock a good selection of cacti and succulents (see pages 125–127 and 136–137 for the best plants available), and these are ideal plants for children, because they are easy to maintain and tolerate a little neglect. Their main growing requirement is lots of warm sunlight, so find a warm, bright position for your plants. Although cacti are drought-tolerant, they do need watering during the summer.

Modern cactus garden
BELOW *Silver-painted pots of different heights, grouped on a pewter tray and surrounded by smooth pebbles, make a striking and stylish way to display a mixed group of cacti and succulents.*

Different pots, different plants
ABOVE *Repotting miniature cacti into hand-painted china cups of different heights and sizes is a novel way of displaying these sculptural plants. Making a collection of miniature cacti and succulents is an inexpensive hobby, and since the plants are easy to look after, ideal for beginners.*

Same pots, same plants
LEFT *These miniature roses* (Rosa chinensis *'Minima') are potted into small yellow and green striped china pots that exactly match their yellow flowers and green foliage. Because the pots are small and will dry out quickly, make sure you water the plants on a regular basis. Remove dead or dying flower heads to maintain a healthy display.*

Low-level display
LEFT *A low foliage arrangement like this one would be ideal for the center of a table. Here, two types of club moss* (Selaginella martensii) *are planted in rows on a kitchen tray, creating a patchwork effect. These plants should be placed in a semishaded position, away from any bright sunlight. They need misting regularly to maintain humidity levels.*

Spring-flowering Displays

AS SOON AS CHRISTMAS is over, and all the decorations have been cleared away, how nice it is to see the early spring bulbs and spring flowering houseplants in the garden centers. While many bulbs are traditionally considered as outdoor features, some can be grown successfully indoors.

Bulbs, such as dwarf narcissi, crocus, and hyacinths, appear in the stores in bud well before any of the spring bulbs in gardens show through. These bulbs have been forced, but once you have enjoyed them inside the house you can plant them outside in the garden to flower again the following year. After they have finished flowering, remove any dead flowers. When the fear of frost has passed, transfer them to the garden, keeping their leaves intact, where you must feed them with a high potash fertilizer every two weeks to encourage them to flower well into the following year.

Primula obconica, with its delicate petals, makes a lovely spring plant for the kitchen windowsill. When the flowers eventually die, you can encourage extra flowering by placing the plant in a cool conservatory or on a frost-free porch where, after a short rest away from the central heating, a second flush of flowers will soon appear.

The hydrangea *(Hydrangea macrophylla)* is a popular spring plant, which makes a nice change from some of the smaller flowering specimens. Although you tend to buy these plants in spring, they will flower well into the summer months if given the correct treatment. Hydrangeas need a great deal of moisture, preferring rainwater to hard tap water, and they are best placed in a flat-bottomed container so they can absorb water freely. Surround the plants with damp moss to encourage humidity and keep them in a cool, bright situation. After they have finished flowering, prune back the stems and repot them into a larger container. These plants benefit from a short stay in the garden during the summer months. Simply bury the pot in a shady part of the garden, watering and feeding periodically with a high potash feed. In fall, bring the plant indoors to a cool, frost-free room and reduce watering to encourage the plant to rest. In early spring, gradually increase watering to bring the plant back into flower once again.

Line of three
LEFT *Three pots of yellow primroses have been placed in this twiggy pot holder to make a pretty feature. Keep the plants well-watered by removing their pots from the holder and submerging them in water. These plants will not last long inside, but will recover if put outside for a short time, away from central heating and dry air.*